



The Catalonia brand. The added value of identity

ARNAU ALBERT

One just needs to sit down at the bar of a lunch menu restaurant on any weekday to state the wisdom of idioms. Most of us eat with the eyes. You sit down looking at the customers and it is not very difficult to see how many follow one same behaviour pattern. Before entering the restaurant they stop at the door to look at the blackboard what the starter and the main course are. And once they are in, doing as if they were looking for a table, they scrutinise the dishes of those eating to take a decision. Today is salad day but those macaroni look very nice. This is a scene repeating every day. It may seem banal to us but it is certainly a good example of how the image ultimately determines most decisions we take in our everyday life. Like when we open the cupboard to choose the shirt we are going to dress to attend a job interview, a simple decision that becomes an outright headache. Because we basically never would judge anybody for a shirt, but in fact it determines how people see us and hence what their opinion of us is. The image says who we are, it is a reflection of our society.



The great invention

The world is today a big supermarket where produce from all over can be found. The market has become big and any company wishing to be successful needs to go international. This is globalisation: enlarging the market pitch. More teams, more rivals, more competition, more need to differentiate as the own brand takes a space on the big shelf of international trade, but also to still be the reference product when you play at home.

We are still associated to Spanish stereotypes instead of appearing with our own attributes as the Spain brand unfortunately still has the best platform to build an international image: the strength of an own state. But we must not appear as what we are not, and least in a context like the current, in which Spain has a rather negative than positive connotation due to the doubts raised by its overall economic situation.

However, if generating a reference brand means to creating success for any company, reaching it as a country becomes the best commercial strategy envisaging internationalisation of the economy. Providing added value for the own products, giving them identity, attributes associated inseparably with their place of origin. According to publicist **Lluís Bassat**, «the brand [...] is an immaterial and invisible product, it qualifies and provides especially added value. It is what the user or consumer feels once his need has been satisfied with the product.»¹ This is what Germans did with engineering, Italians with design and Japanese with technology, for we look in a different way at a car just because it is German or Korean, a dress made in Italy or Turkey and a TV set manufactured in Japan or China. The presumed quality is not the same.

And this added value is provided by the place of origin, the country brand.

But what is the image conveyed by Catalan products? How are they shown to the world? What is our country brand? Ramon Aymerich, chief editor of the economy section at **La Vanguardia** newspaper, explains that Simon, a microelectronics company, presents itself in China with a video featuring a lady dancing flamenco, but «the “Spain” brand is not a good access card in certain markets, where Spanish products are still perceived as having low quality. [...] But properties attached to Catalan products able to identify them at a given point are still to be set out.»²

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We are still associated to Spanish stereotypes instead of appearing with our own attributes as the Spain brand unfortunately still has the best platform to build an international image: the strength of an own state. But we must not appear as what we are not, and least in a context like the current, in which Spain has a rather negative than positive connotation due to the doubts raised by its overall economic situation. We need to adopt an own brand to play under equal conditions in the new globalisation paradigm: defining common properties for our own products, having added value placing them in a good starting position in the global market.

We are as we are

Being Catalan per se does not provide any added value. It is perceptions, properties associated to the idea of being Catalan what makes products

with this label have a given image. And these properties, this identity are not inalienable items. They are constructions, artificial items. Italians have no good taste by nature. They have sold this image and the rest of the world bought it. We could say the same of the Japanese, Germans and in fact most leading countries in the world.

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But how are we Catalans? What are our properties and hence the added value we can give to our products? For a long time, we have been appearing to the world as the country of sun and beach. It's as simple as that: making assets out of what most people seek in their holidays, a good marketing strategy that made the Catalan coast one of Europe's main tourist destinations.

However, most experts agree that this model is running out. The world is discovering more and more places also having sun and beach, besides being cheaper and more exotic than Catalonia. Likewise, the tourist profile is changing. The simplicity of the sun and beach model is becoming less attractive for a better informed and demanding audience. They do not seek just good weather, relax or party time at a low cost anymore. They look for a unique experience, a set of emotions they can find in that destination only.

Francesc Iglésies, head of Strategic Planning at the **Catalan Tourism Agency**, explains how the foundations of a shift in Catalonia's tourist model have been set in recent years, by which «the key lies in the great diversity and integration of tourist products to provide the traditional model with added value by means of territorial restructuring

of cultural and identity-based tourism.» This allows to make progress towards a «structure of customised, sustainable and high-quality products focused on consumption of unique experiences».

But what can be offered that is unique? To Mr Iglésies, it is «identity expressed through culture, history, gastronomy, architecture, art, lifestyle, etc.»: a whole set of intangibles defining the way of being, living, working and understanding the world in a place where people live well, very well. Probably the best place to live in.

This exaggerated image is perhaps less so if we look at the results of the **European Cities Monitor 2009³** by **Cushman & Wakefield** Healey & Baker consulting firm. To most of the 500 senior executives interviewed by researchers, Catalonia's capital is the European city with the highest living standard for an eighth consecutive year. But there is more to it. Barcelona is seen as the city with the biggest progress and the fourth most preferred in Europe to do business after London, Paris and Frankfurt.

We can provide identity expressed through culture, history, gastronomy, architecture, art, lifestyle, etc.: a whole set of intangibles defining the way of being, living, working and understanding the world in a place where people live well, very well. Barcelona is the European city with the highest living standard for an eighth consecutive year.

We are probably not the country with the highest living standard. In fact, we always have been comparing ourselves – with some envy – with Nordic countries and their welfare state. But the important is that Barcelona and the country create that picture, perhaps by chance or as a result of a strategy. The truth is that our lifestyle is becoming a great international focus of attraction, a strong thread to rethink the Catalonia brand and create some properties, a character bringing

new value into the tourist branch while impregnating Catalan products we present to the world. Identifying the intangibles defining us, making a difference, the added value of visiting the place where people live best, but as well the added value of buying products made with an enviable lifestyle, as if consuming it took you to the heart of the Mediterranean – living as people in Catalonia do but in any city in the world.

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Work well done

The idea of exporting our lifestyle is not new. In fact, there are companies using this strategy successfully. They are in different industries because as opposed to other identity-based commercial strategies, adding value to products by means of an intangibles like the feeling of living in a specific way can be exported to most productive segments. The quality of Japanese



Advertising by Estrella Damm is associated with our way of doing and living.

technology – which requires specific knowledge, infrastructure and organisation – can hardly be associated with areas like services. But identifying some specific values can be easily transferred to fashion, tourism, design, culture, gastronomy, etc. Opportunities are manifold, and this is the great potential of the properties making this Catalonia brand.

There are many examples, but the best are probably the last campaigns by Estrella Damm. Who does not remember the advertisement in which monsieur Henry is asked for the reasons for which he signed for FC Barcelona? The climate, two hours lunch, good food, siesta, our landscape...⁴ Or when we are told that Messi's fate was sealed on a paper napkin on a bar terrace. «Because we like to be in the street, in sidewalk cafés, in bars. We are used to do business on a paper napkin and abide by it. Because here, a paper napkin is much more than a paper napkin. [...] There are things that are much more than what they seem.»⁵

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If we analyse both ads, we will see that despite focusing on two celebrities, Thierry Henry and Leo Messi, it is us who actually play the main role in the advertisement. Henry and Messi are just the hook to show us some properties of our identity and make us feel proud of it. Advertisements seek empathy with the consumer, have us «identify with the beer», as Fede Segarra, the head of communication and external relations at the Damm Group says, to become «a beer that is drunk where people live best», as the ads finish.

The impact of the economic crisis made it too daring to keep this slogan. Nevertheless, Damm did not give up its strategy of claiming our lifestyle. For instance, to enter 2010, aware that these are difficult times for people and companies, Damm and FC Barcelona gave an optimistic message by looking into all values that led the team under coach Guardiola to win all possible titles in the previous season: «work well done.»⁶ And the best way of doing it was looking for young entrepreneurs representing this way of being, living and working.

Common values like seriousness, perfectionism and the search of excellence to show our love for well done work are the basic lines of this ad. Working passionately as work needs to be understood as something more than earning one's life, a personal commitment with oneself. Being tenacious, doing an effort every day as it is only with effort, dedication and constance that we will meet our targets.

Successful persons like actress Irene Montalà, Benjamin Mordoh (recycling entrepreneur, winner of the *Barcelona Capital Emprenedora 2009* award), Gerard Estadella, Gree (photographer of the main international fashion magazines), Marc Escursell (creator of Xocoa), Xavier Claramunt (head of Galactic Suite, the first space hotel project), Txell Miras (winner of the *Barcelona és Moda* award) and seven other Catalans reveal the secret of their success.

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we will meet our targets. This exaltation of the value of labour is combined with attributes like humility, cooperation and teamwork, for we will not be able to meet our targets on our own. Or daringness, curiosity, spirit of becoming better, for we will only make progress with permanent innovation. All this with the pride and satisfaction of values we give to our products that are after all the ones defining us as a nation. This is the secret of the FC Barcelona success under Guardiola as well as that of many Catalan companies that despite the crisis are having excellent results.

Bread out of stones

Damm is a brewery with a very different image from the one it had only ten years ago. What became of those advertisements in which giraffes, elephants, lions and monkeys were celebrating the arrival of good weather with an Estrella in their hand while dancing the summer song?⁷ What became of the Estrella Disco? The contrast between the attributes showing this commercial strategy and recent summer campaigns in Formentera⁸ or featuring midsummer eve in Cadaqués and Ciutadella⁹ is enormous, from promoting a product associating it with leisure and partying to introducing everyday beer of a territory where you'll have unique experiences searching «emotional closeness» as Mr Segarra puts it.

Damm reinvented the brand. That image of standard, simple «sun and beach» beer disappeared in favour of a new product as if it were a new beer. But the product is the same. The difference is that it has been given added value now, like a sort of denomination of origin defining it and we identify with. It is our everyday beer, the one we have day in, day out.

This image change comes in the wake of transformation of quality attributes associated with the brand. In words of Mr Segarra, Damm «underwent a shift towards emotion in parallel with a change of feelings on the product quality,

a shift from a beer with a clear “low-class” profile to a more select product». This is not only achieved with changes in commercial strategy but it also requires innovation to earn credibility and reputation.

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Along these lines, Damm launched new products of a higher segment in recent years, for instance AK Damm. But its paradigmatic example is probably Inèdit, a beer by chef Ferran Adrià with which Damm tries to enter the international market selling the uniqueness and creativity of the reputedly world’s best chef. With these new products, the company not only manages to enter new markets but also to convey a higher quality of the products it has always been manufacturing, like Estrella.

But what are the reasons for this change of image? Why this need of reinventing? Reasons are for sure manifold, from the need to improve the product to go international to adaptation to change experienced in a society like the Catalan that is increasingly demanding. Selling a beer promising fun is not enough anymore. People look for something else. In this point, the arrival of new competition has definitely played a decisive role.

Moving it

In summer 2004, the reopening of the old Moritz brewery in Barcelona, founded in 1856, preceded an outright revolution in the Catalan market.

Moritz created an image of quality beer made with water from the Font d’Or well and replacing hops aroma extracts by direct infusions from its flowers. And now, using its history, it created a brand with added value. It is not only a good product; Moritz wished to become the Catalan beer par excellence, and they have done it to a large extent.

To Albert Castellón, general manager at Moritz, «showing our Catalan way is a natural choice according to its culture and market» as «the consumer is less ready to give up what they feel as belonging to them: their language, values and culture».

The commercial strategy at Moritz is based on a very accurate image by which the iconography of its historical legacy is modernised to provide a new corporate identity aiming at creating an image of beer rooted in the country despite having been out of market for almost thirty years. Together with its product quality, Moritz reasserts its brand by using Catalan as its commercial language without any complex, giving credibility to the Catalan beer image. To Albert Castellón, general manager at Moritz, «showing our Catalan way is a natural choice according to its culture and market» as «the consumer is less ready to give up what they feel as belonging to them: their language, values and culture».

It was not an easy thing to do. It could seem that there was not enough room for a new brand in such a competitive and demanding market as beer. Competition is very fierce. But success becomes apparent every time a Moritz rep is seen driving an old Seat 600 on Catalan roads. They did it. Besides having consolidated a big share in the Catalan market, they are in more than fifteen countries. The product is good and Catalan is no disadvantage in going their way. It is a distinctive item strengthening the brand by singularising it. «It is a positioning providing unique recognition across the world», Mr Castellón says, concluding:

«Moritz shows that what is local can fight against the global as it appeals directly to the consumer and his world.»

The market impact of the Moritz commercial strategy is obvious, and not just because of success. The revolution caused by the new style introduced by Moritz has become an incentive for giants like Damm to move, break up their old image and look for a new way of appearing before the market.

Damm is playing indirectly with value we can associate to a specific lifestyle. Moritz appears clearly as the Catalan beer. Both use identity to provide their products with added value.

Brick by brick

These are difficult times for Catalan companies and their employees. The recipe of innovation and internationalisation to overcome the crisis is becoming commonplace: making good products and opening a room in the international market. It is not easy but we did it in tougher times than these. For instance, we were among the first in doing the Industrial Revolution without having one single indispensable item to do it: neither coal nor water nor cotton; nor a state acting in our favour. And we did it. And doing work well done, we will do it again now.

Companies like Custo, Mango and Sita Murt associate their clothes with the appeal of Catalonia's capital, as Natura Bissé does in cosmetics.

Our products can be imitated but our lifestyle cannot. This is how we have appeared before the world, like Damm, Moritz and many other Catalan companies undertaking internationalisation and turning their being Catalan into added value.

It is a distinctive feature of the product quality, as shows the TV3 programme [Export.cat](#)¹⁰ with the

history of local food products like anchovies, hazelnuts, nougat, olive oil and sparkling wine, which entered many cuisines across the world. The products of the Catalan food industry are supported by the Government of Catalonia through the Promoting Body of Catalan Exports (PRODECA),¹¹ which provides aid to foster exports. The same does ACCIÓ,¹² the Catalan governmental agency fostering innovation and internationalisation of Catalan companies through its thirty-five offices spread over the world.

We can find examples of best practices in many areas, for instance in fashion, in which companies like Custo, Mango and Sita Murt associate their clothes with the appeal of Catalonia's capital, as Natura Bissé does in cosmetics. Its CEO and general manager Verónica Fisas asserts that what is needed «is that we all agree [...] as we often



Companies like Mango associate their product to the name of Barcelona.

talk of the Barcelona brand and what is needed is to live up to it [...]. Business and public authorities need to join in this goal.»

The area of culture, with internationally renowned persons like actor **Sergi López** and writer **Jaume Cabré**, also shows the added value provided by identity, as does gastronomy: «a Catalan-based cuisine [...] driven by the quality of local produce», as **Carme Ruscalleda**, chef at **Sant Pau**, puts it. Together with other big names of Catalan cuisine like **Santi Santamaria**, they exploit its «cultural and social» as well as «nutritional and healthy values». To Ms Ruscalleda, Catalan identity plays a very important role in creating the image of Sant Pau restaurant «based on the origins, education, will and the wealth of Catalan cuisine».

«A Catalan-based cuisine [...] driven by the quality of local produce», as Carme Ruscalleda, chef at Sant Pau, puts it. In her opinion, Catalan identity plays a very important role in creating the image of Sant Pau restaurant «based on the origins, education, will and the wealth of Catalan cuisine».

However, if there is anybody embodying this commercial strategy, it is the entrepreneurs joined in the **FemCAT** foundation. This organisation was created in 2004 with the aim of making Catalonia one of the leading countries in Europe and the world in social and economic terms. They are clear about it. It requires innovation, competitiveness, social cohesion in the country and projecting Catalonia to the world. Projecting means to have the necessary

infrastructures as well as having a Catalan airline as is Spanair, which was bought to strengthen Barcelona airport. But it is also presenting to the world as we are. This is how Germán Ramón-Cortés, vice-president of FemCAT coordinating the internationalisation of the Catalonia brand, explains it. To him, «country brands are one of the most important assets in a global world. To compete in the world, we need to be able to have a brand that joins, represents and presents us; a brand explaining the essence of what we are and what we want to be.»

Selling Catalonia as a brand to have a share in the market, in the world, this is the goal. This is what **FC Barcelona**, the country's biggest sports club does, having become one of Catalonia's main ambassadors with a clearly entrepreneurial spirit. It has no problem in appearing as a club deeply rooted in its territory, a club that, without surrendering its origin, has opened to the world, showing its universal vision by means of multiple solidarity projects done together with **UNICEF**. It is a singular, distinctive and determined way of doing things we feel identified with. It raises our pride and the world's admiration. It is the best business card for a club and a whole country.

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